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THE TRUE AIMS OF AMERICAN AMBITION.

AN

ADDRESS

Delivered before the Literary Societies

OF

PENNSYLVANIA COLLEGE.

GETTYSBURG, SEPTEMBER 15, 1852.

BY

ROBERT T. CONRAD.

PHILADELPHIA:

CRISSY & MARKLEY, PRINTERS, GOLDSMITHS' HALL, LIBRARY ST.

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PENNSYLVANIA COLLEGE, GETTYSBURG.

Wednesday Evening, September 15, 1852.

Hon. R. T. Conrad,

Dear Sir:—The Literary Societies of Pennsylvania College, tender to you, through us, their sincere thanks for the truly chaste, eloquent and forcible Address delivered by you this evening, at their request; and respectfully solicit a copy for publication.

Your compliance will much oblige,

Your obedient servants,

G. H. SPANG, J. W. KREGALO,
R. HILL, T. W. KEMP,
J. W. HOSSLER, T. T. TITUS,

Joint Committee of Societies.

PHILADELPHIA, October 25, 1852.

Gentlemen:—

It is a source of regret to me, that the same cause which made the preparation of the Address delivered before your Societies, on the 15th of September, culpably hurried, has rendered my compliance with your flattering request for a copy, as culpably tardy. I trust that the imperative requisitions of other and interfering duties, which, in each instance, induced the fault, will also plead its pardon.

With great respect,

Very truly your's, etc.,

R. T. CONRAD.

MR. G. H. SPANG, MR. J. W. KREGALO,
" R. HILL, " T. W. KEMP,
" J. W. HOSSLER, " T. T. TITUS,

Joint Committee of Societies of Penn. College.

ADDRESS.

As the day dawned upon the Ægean sea, more than two thousand years ago, all Athens gathered at the port of Piræus, to witness the departure, to distant seas and doubtful battles, of the most powerful and magnificent fleet and army that had ever floated upon the Mediterranean. It bore the flower of the Athenian chivalry to the contemplated conquest of Sicily; and the eager spirit of that excitable people flushed to anticipate the triumph. Pomp and splendor were exhausted upon the glittering armament; and, when the trumpet sounded, as the first rays of the sun lighted the Acropolis, the prayers of priests, the hymns of women and the shouts of men arose from the countless multitude; and thousands of golden cups poured the red libation; and thousands of upraised hands implored the blessings of their guardian Minerva, upon that brilliant and exulting fleet, as it bore away before the Ægean breeze to swell, with a new conquest, the giddy Queen of the Sea. Let them enjoy their triumph: it is their last! Let them gaze upon the receding sails and streamers—they will never behold them again! Fleet and army soon strewed the beach of Syracuse; and though Athens, long after, refused to believe the tale of terror, and

sentenced to death the wretched fugitive who told it—it was not the less true: they perished; and with them—there, in that distant port,—perished the glory of Athens. As Cicero has well said: *hic primum opes illius civitatis victæ, comminutæ, depressæque sunt; in hoc portu, Atheniensum nobilitatis imperii, gloriiæ naufragium factum existimatur.*

What a contrast is presented to this arrogant adventure of wrong and rapine, by the departure and return of that high and holy enterprise which, many ages after, and when Athens and Syracuse were remembered dreams, left the port of Palos to dare an unknown ocean and an unknown fate! Their feeble vessels glittered with no pomp and blazed with no anticipated triumph; and though friends were there, pale and anxious, to bid a faltering God speed to the majestic Columbus and his hardy followers, no shout broke the silence; and their adieus were uttered amid tears, and prayers, and hopes that trembled like terrors. The sea, whose untracked waste they entered upon, stretched before them—as the expanse of time, my young friends, stretches before you—chartless and limitless; and they sought, as you seek, a world—the Atlantis of Plato, the vision of the poet and philosopher for ages. Launched upon that sea, their aim the loftiest that ever lifted human ambition, how did they return? A continent leaned forward to receive them. Princes and monarchs hastened to give them welcome. They had sought a world and won it; and, amid prayers and rejoicings, the ringing of bells and the firing of cannon, Columbus displayed the evidences and trophies of that achievement which made him immortal, and changed the aspect and destinies of the world.

This scene and this occasion force memories like these upon the mind; and those memories flash their light upon the present

and the future. We stand by the shore of the vast sea of life, upon which is launched an enterprize of "great pith and moment," for the happy fate of which a thousand hearts beat anxiously. That ocean,—how often soever traversed, however crowded even now by other barks—is, to you, but conjecturally known. You only know that it is the home of storm and sunshine, of peril and triumph; of rocks and eddies that menace death, of isles and shores that promise fame and fortune: but of the event of that dim voyage, who knows but that Being, who "maketh a way in the sea and a path in the mighty waters?" The spectacle, animating and cheerful, lighted by eyes of love and softened by tones of melody, is yet one which thoughtful eyes cannot look upon without anxious interest. The young voyagers tread the deck, and look forth upon the waves and their far horizon, with hearts of hope and confidence—that hope with which youth halos all the future—that confidence which ever waits upon conscious health and strength and daring. Of those who stand upon the beach to watch the departure of this gay and gallant fleet, all have wishes and prayers for their prosperity; but though some there are who, like the Athenians upon the Piræus, hail, in their future, only certain conquest and triumph, there are others who, like the watchers that paled at the departure of Columbus, feel their earnest aspirations "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," and who tremble while they trust.

Will it be churlish, even now, amid all this exuberance of joy and hope and confidence, to pause and reflect a moment on the direction and duties of those voyagers; the aims, aspirations and rewards of that voyage? This has, in like cases, been done

a thousand times. The occasion has never been when the theme was not old—the time will never come when that theme will not be, in its ever varying and momentous applications, new. And yet the knowledge that aspires to direct human action seldom avails, with the youthful, till enforced by experience. The blooming heroes of Pompey's army, laughed at the scarred veterans who foretold the rough truths which Pharsalia realized. The sea of life has no rocks to the fresh mariner, but those on which himself is shattered. But even the confident and generous spirit of Hope, may pause to study what triumphs—inasmuch as triumphs must be won—are worth the winning. This, then, be our grateful study.

What generous spirit is that which has attended and stimulated your cloistered labors; trimmed your midnight lamp; and led you, through the toils of your probation, to this your starting triumph? It is the same that inspired Homer and Archimides; that lit the councils of Sesostris and Cæsar; that has impelled mankind in all climes and ages—differing in all else, but alike in this—to struggle upwards and seek the better—the better—and still and ever, the better. This it is that distinguishes man from all others of God's creatures, as indefinitely progressive—panting to attain, and capable of attaining, a rank, in the scale of being, so far above his origin, as to constitute him almost a different creature. And this proves the glorious immortality of his spirit; for supreme wisdom would never have endowed him with this boundless desire, and sublime power, of expansion, to confine its development within a sphere so inadequate and unworthy as the present existence. It is this impulse of progression, this ethereal spark, *ambition*,

that has urged our race to its present stage of improvement and elevation; and that promises light for the future, to which the radiance of the past is but a shadow. For when and while human progress is in the path of divine truth—and no longer—there is no limit to its career, no bound to its triumphs. Then, too, science, freedom, dominion and happiness follow in its train. It is only where it walks with guilt, that decay and wo control and check it. So long as ambition can exist and aspire free from that weight, it will, by its own empyreal buoyancy, rise; rise to an elevation beyond human imagination or human hope; rise until

"Its head wears sunbeams and its feet touch stars."

In proportion as this aspiring principle in man is active or dull, individuals and nations are vigorous or feeble; as it is lofty or sordid, they are noble or degraded; as it is pure or corrupt, they are happy or wretched; as it is wise or wandering, they are conquerors or conquered.

The ambition of the youthful is ever generous and noble. The passion of the unscarred aspirant is for renown; and in its pursuit it is easy to scale the heavens; every burthen is light and every peril is lovely. This burning spirit exclaims with Percy:—

Oh! the blood more stirs,
To rouse a lion than to start a hare.
By heaven, methinks it were an easy leap,
To pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon;
Or dive into the bottom of the deep,
Where fathom line could never touch the ground,
And pluck up drowned Honour by the locks;
So he that doth redeem her thence, might wear
Without a corrival, all her dignities."

After years, when the cold breath of the world has chilled the generous ardour of the heart, may, and too often do, acknowledge idols more sordid: but when, in the flush and morning of life, ambition pours its slant glory over the soul, it lights up hopes and desires yet incorrupt and beautiful in the dewy freshness of nature. The aspirant then seeks renown—but with no selfish aim. He would kindle a holy fire upon the altar of fame, that it may warm and light the hearts he cherishes. He would win, by deeds of noble emprize, the brightest wreath—but it would be to lay it at a parent's feet. How glorious the privilege, thus to repay the untold treasures of a parent's love! For what has earth so lofty, so pure, so free from selfish and earthy taint, as that affection which yearns over a child; which watches and hopes, labors and lives, struggles through the weariness of the day, and ponders and prays through the watches of the night, to lift his spirit up to lofty aims and fit him for a career of worth and honor. Life has no triumph so noble—none so pure and sweet—as when the youthful aspirant, glowing with joy and pride, lays his first laurel-leaf before his father; and sees the thoughtful brow flush with parental exultation, and the fond eye fill with tremulous tenderness, over the fulfilment of a father's prayers, the fruition of a father's hopes. Happy the son who has won this crown: the future has, can have, no brighter one. The ambition that bears such fruit—richer than that of the Hesperides—may well be cherished; for the reward of such a son will be the blessing of the Father of all.

But let us enquire, to what special cause, what peculiar duty, should the energies of such an ambition, virtuous, elevated and earnest, be devoted?

The aspirant is an American: what cause, then, shall dare claim the first fruits of his genius and his heart, but that of his country? He loves her, with the gushing fulness and unselfish devotion of the heart's first and purest love. How could he otherwise? Her soil claims a parent's right to that love; and were it churlish as winter, could he love it less than the Switzer loves his cliffs? Were it torrid as Arabia, could he cherish it less than the Bedouin his sands? But the grandeur and beauty of the boon land of his birth, where lavish Nature seems to have gathered her wonders as for a race of free giants—the cloistered aisles of her sublime and solemn forests—the cataract voices that thunder among her hills—the glorious rivers that sweep, with queenly magnificence, among valleys the loveliest that the zephyr visits—how could these be his own, and be unloved? And then her annals, rich in the unrivalled triumphs of a calm and christian heroism—her valor, her virtues, but more than all her liberty, calm and crimeless, lofty and self-restrained, that lifts her above all ancient or modern comparison—the morning star of the nations! Why, he were duller than the dullest clod of her vallies, did not his heart swell with exulting gratitude to the God that had made such a land, and made him a child upon its bosom. It is wise, therefore, and well, that he loves his native land, and loves it thus; not with a cold sense of filial duty merely—the trickling of an icicle patriotism—but with a full and fiery passion; that regards one life as too poor an offering for such a country, yet would give it, freely, as the sun gives its light or the heaven its dew—would pour out his young, warm blood exultingly in the battle, and bless each sacrificial drop as it bubbled forth. Oh, more than mountains and rivers, than wealth and prowess, than greatness and splendour, is this spirit the *true*

glory of our land! And this spirit, let me add, is no idle dream, no lofty fiction. It is a presence and a reality; it lives and moves and has its being in every pulsation of the mighty heart of our country: and should the shadow darken and the peril come, it will start forth mightier than any mere throbless physical power, to save and to achieve. It is this passion of patriotism that can alone make a people free and happy. The dull devotion of enforced allegiance or unfelt duty may shed a cold, lunar light over a land; but it is the heat of the solar heart alone that can vivify and invigorate, can render feebleness invincible, and make, what would else be a polar desolation, a scene of beauty—a glory and a joy.

But let us ask the young enthusiast, what is it that you covet, what would you win, for this land of your love? And his heart leaps, with the response, to his lips: "All—all! All that skill and power, genius and courage can achieve for her. I would make her very paupers princes—would velvet every valley with green, and diadem every mountain with palaces. Her wealth should be universal as her soil—her will should be a destiny; her armies should be a consuming fire, and her fleets should sweep the seas, as the hurricane cloud sweeps the heavens. The sun should not rise with a radiance like her glory; nor set, in his eternal revolutions, upon her limits!" How wretched were man, should every prayer be heard and every wish be gratified! Well for us, in our blindness, is it that there is

> "A Divinity
> Which shapes our ends, rough-hew them as we may."

Observe how fatally misdirected would be the patriotism that cherished such aims or sought such results for its country.

Equal and general wealth, if desirable, is impossible; and, if our Mississippi were transformed to a Pactolus, pouring an ocean of gold through the land, it would be still impossible. There may be, to a considerable degree there happily is, an equality of competence; but even that can only exist where toil is universal and rewarded. Wealth is comparative, and is only known in the presence of a subject poverty. Where one slumbers another must sweat: but where all rest, who will labour? where all are lords, who will be servants? If attainable, national wealth, in excess, is a doubtful blessing.

> "Ill fares the land, to hastening griefs a prey,
> Where wealth accumulates and men decay."

It is inconsistent with vigor and hardiness; for without necessity there is no industry, and without industry there can be neither moral nor physical health. Labor alone can secure vigor, virtue, valor and freedom. Soils and climes that dispense with toil, tendering, from the exuberance of nature, an unsolicited subsistence, exhibit human nature in its basest degradation and wretchedness. The decay of republics may be ascribed rather to sloth than to any other cause. The existence of domestic slavery among the Greeks, and the consequent idleness of the citizens, especially the Spartans and Athenians, was the spring of their every social and political evil. While the Romans were poor and toiled, they were worthy of freedom, and were free; when conquest introduced slaves, and the masters of the world were relieved from labour, they sank into a debasement which, though it shines like phospherescent putrefaction, presents, when studied minutely, a picture of human nature more revolting than that of the lowest class of human brutes in Africa. The law is

universal and unrelenting. It is written in the epitaphs of buried nations; for where are those cities of the past that made the world's eye dim, gazing at their splendor? The prayer of the patriot should be that of Agar : "Give me neither poverty nor riches."* He should desire for his country only the unrestrained and undiscouraged right to toil—the inestimable liberty of labor. Man's highest privilege and noblest glory, his truest security and richest blessing, is virtuous, brave, lofty-browed labor. Its days are days of honor, and its nights are nights of peace. It is the parent, not only of independence and courage, of virtue and tranquillity, but also of science and the arts, of all that lifts the mind to truth and the moral nature to God. While wealth shrinks, with a corrupt frame and coward heart, into lazar-like sloth and infamy, toil treads the earth with the step of a giant and the port of a conqueror, and looks up to heaven with the broad brow of conscious virtue, courage and liberty. This is true dignity—true affluence; and while we possess it, we need no higher rank, no better riches.

It is true, that a certain degree of competence is required, to secure for a people leisure and means for study and improvement;† but these we possess. Indolence has no leisure; and luxury, though its vices are too often called refinements, boasts

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* Freedom with Virtue takes her seat:
Her proper place, her only scene
Is in the golden mean;
She lives not with the sordid or the great. *Cowley.*

† But for one end, one much neglected use,
Are riches worth your care, (for nature's wants
Are few, and without opulence supplied:)
This noble end is to produce the soul. *Armstrong.*

few arts that virtue need envy. Even its amusements are pursued to a guilty excess that chokes and suppresses every manlier aim and occupation. The nations which boast the greatest excellence in those frivolous arts by which time is degraded and sacrificed, and life frittered, like a toy, away, are in every case softened to enervation and refined to vice. It is a doubtful recommendation that no noble nor manly trait has been able to survive this engrossing zeal for such pursuits; and it may be questioned, whether the character or happiness of our people is likely to be promoted, by the efforts made to introduce those arts which constitute the only boast of the communities in which they flourish, but in which virtue, freedom and manly truth are strangers. The refinements and pleasures of christian virtue afford happiness enough for freemen: those of luxury, idleness and sensual licence may be left to the races of men who are content to be slaves, and of women who are willing to be their companions.

If the ambition that craves national wealth be a dangerous delusion, that which fosters the lust of territorial acquisition, whether by conquest, purchase or policy, is still more menacing. Of course, I would not trench upon any past or present subject of political controversy. The instinct of national acquisition is selfish, and therefore universal. No nation has ever declined an extension of its domain. When Augustus left, as a legacy, his counsel that the empire should be confined within the Rhine and Euphrates, the desert and the ocean, it was ascribed to the fact that Rome had more to fear than to hope from the chance of arms. And when, reverting to this policy, the conquests of Trajan were relinquished by his successor—for the god Termi-

nus, who presides over boundaries, and had refused to yield place to Jupiter, submitted to the authority of Hadrian,—the act was attributed not to moderation, but to envy. But universal as is this grasping disposition, let us hope that wiser councils will make us in this, as in our destiny, a contrast to the rupublics of old. Territory is desired as an accession of power; but, beyond a moderate point, it ceases to impart strength. A nation is strong as it is "well compact;" acquisition often expands and enfeebles it. A fortress is more defensible than a city; a city than the open country; a well-knit and consolidated frame, than one unwieldy and bloated; and thus an expanded and diffused empire is more exposed and less defensible. It is the people of a country, not its acres, that make its power. What constitutes a State? asks Sir Wm. Jones.

> What constitutes a State?
> Not high-raised battlement and labor'd mound;
> Thick wall or moated gate;
> Not cities proud with spires and turrets crown'd;
> Nor bays and broad arm'd ports,
> Where laughing at the storm, rich navies ride;
> Not starr'd and spangled courts
> Where low-bred baseness wafts perfume to pride:
> No; men—high-minded men.*

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* Byron has expressed the thought with no less vigour—

> "Why, nature's self detains the victor's car;
> And makes your land impregnable, if earth
> Could be so: but alone she will not war,
> Yet aids the warrior worthy of his birth,
> In a soil where the mothers bring forth men:
> Not so with those whose souls are little worth;
> For them no fortress can avail,—the den
> Of the poor reptile that preserves its sting,
> Is more secure than walls of adamant, when
> The hearts of those within are quivering."

Expanded territory may present a sickly show of strength; but the union, the home-spirit, the patriotism of a well-knit people, constitute the greatest, perhaps the only element of national power.

Acquisition is prompted also by a false love of national glory; yet it is fatal to that glory. There is no real glory in plenitude of territory, or Mahoney might be envied; or in millions of population, or China would be unrivalled. True renown lives only in great deeds or great virtues—the acts of men, not the stage on which they perform. But still grosser is the delusion that the vanity of territorial possessions inspires love or pride of country. The contrary is emphatically true, and the reason is apparent. Every feeling of the human bosom is strongest when concentrated—feeblest when diffused. Thus, love, friendship, benevolence, grow thinner by expansion; until, like circles in the water, weakening as they widen, they are lost in unmarked ripples. The ductile gold of patriotic sentiment may be stretched to glitter over half a world, but it will glitter only. The smallest nations, those whose home and country were the same, afford us all our examples of devoted patriotism: need I refer to the Grecian, Italian and Dutch republics? The Roman devotion was sublime, while Rome was their country; but where was it when the world was Rome? The voice of home, that spoke, in the tones and with the authority of heaven, on the Tiber, was unheard or unheeded in the faint echoes that hardly vibrated over the Euphrates. The throb that was mighty at Rome, the heart, was lost in feeble and fluttering pulsations in Parthia or Caledonia, the extremities. Nor is there anything in American patriotism to exempt it from this universal law. I desire no

irrational contraction of empire : but, as we are, there is enough of territory for the head and heart to compass. When our country shall have filled up with a homogeneous people; when the moss shall have grown upon her boundary towers; when her gristle shall have hardened into bone; when her love shall have ripened into veneration, and her loyalty become a nature;—then it will be time for ambition to ask for more.

It is common to urge an expansion of empire as the means of extending free principles. The readier, safer, and less suspicious mode, is by the peaceful proclamation of truth and the silent eloquence of example. The propagandism of craft or conquest is seldom recognized by truth or welcomed by humanity. Conquest corrupts and crushes the victor and the victim alike. The freemen of Greece and Rome subdued, in turn, the world; did they leave it more free or happy? or were not their triumphs the doom of the human race? No, the cause of right and truth needs no such auxiliaries. Its light will rise over the world, if at all, as the sun rises, in tranquil and gradual glory; and not burst forth like volcanoes, in earthquake and thunder, throwing its lurid light, and pouring its lava-torrent, over an affrighted people and a desolated land.

The thoughtful friends of human freedom should remember, that Providence has ever preferred small to large nations, as the depositories of liberty and the examples of exalted patriotism, advanced civilization and lofty public spirit. The old world history is uniform in this testimony: and it is the division of modern Europe into various independent nations, and the mutual watchfulness and emulation, vigour and courage thus produced, that have given birth to the civilization which, com-

pared to that of the ancients, is as mid-day to a dubious torch-light; that have originated systems of free representative government; that have rescued Christianity from relapsed Paganism, by the Reformation; and that have given to the human mind a progressive impulse which nothing can stay, but the unfortunate aggregation of power in one vast empire, as is menaced by the possible precipitation of Russia, like a crushing mountain, upon the divided sovereignties of the West and South.

But the peril which American patriotism most dreads—dreads with a terror which is anguish—is the inevitable tendency of overgrown empires to dissolution. The past has many instances of this result—but not one of escape from it. Can the lesson be lost upon us? The federative bond of union, though silken, is strong; but acquisition has already strained it, until patriot hearts grew faint and patriot courage trembled. There are limits to every human power; what may be the point beyond which our system may not be stretched over different nations and races, soils and seas, various in their character, language, habits and sentiments, and opposite in their ambition and interests—who can determine? And who, so rash and reckless, so false to his country, so regardless of the world's brightest, but latest hope, as experimentally to try? To the true patriot, the country, the government, the homes and hopes of our fathers, are empire and glory enough. That ambition is frenzy, which would stake them upon the truth of a dream, or the fate of a chimera.

If not to national wealth nor national acquisition, where shall the ambition of the patriot turn? To military and naval prowess and glory? Shall the tread of our armies shake the bosom of

the startled earth, and the thunder of our fleets—more potent than the scourge of Xerxes—affright the subject ocean? The people that win opulence or empire at the expense of others are, by profession, robbers, and must rely upon fleets and armies: but a nation just and right-respecting, what need has it, save for self-defence, of wars and warriors? Hallowed by right and necessity, the patriot soldier's is a holy calling; and earth knows no spectacle of greater moral sublimity, than a brave and free people nobly contending for their birth-right. Our annals are radiant with this virtue—when the mother armed her boy in defence of their hearth-stone, and he went forth, with her kisses upon his lip and her blessing in his heart, to strike down the invader or to die. And I thank heaven that the same rich blood still swells American hearts, impatient to burst forth upon the altar sacred to freedom, and the same spirit still burns that made the halls of Nassau a fortification, and her students heroes in our revolution. That spirit would, if need were, renew the noble scene, even within these revered walls; young breasts would again be bared, emulous, in such a cause, of the luxury of suffering or the privilege of death; and if that glorious privilege were won, young lips would murmur—as the life stream flowed and the death-film gathered—*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori!* But it is this sentiment only, that can dignify the art of homicide. The love of war, for itself, whether as a national or individual passion, is beneath the dignity of human nature. Cherished for the frivolous splendor by which it ministers to an execrable but barbaric vanity, for dress and decoration, plume and banner,

> the quality,
> Pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war,

it is worthy only the contempt of all who rank above idiot and empty self-idolaters. The impulse that urges war or seeks military life for its sanguinary excitement, is one that is shared with the ravening wolf, which, overcloyed, still slays, or with the Moloch of Milton. This appetite for blood neither constitutes nor characterizes courage. The bravest nations have ever been those who wage no wars but in self-defence. The insanity that permits ambitious soldiers to sluice the veins of empires, to waste realms, find music in the shrieks of outraged innocence, and pastime in white hairs dabbled in blood, or infant forms struggling on pikes—and all this to win a feather for the master murderer,—is a mystery which philosophy has never solved. That this is guilt, is horror, we know: but how is it glory? Perhaps I may be pardoned a quotation from an unpublished work of my own:

> Can the white hand of pure and holy Right,
> Be in the hue of human slaughter dyed?
> Can piety a pretext find to smite,
> Making libation of the gash'd heart's tide?
> What right to quench that flame—to heaven allied—
> Which earth can ne'er relume? Could human deed,
> Have driven our Saviour to a homicide?
> Dread should the danger be, and dire the need,
> That asks one sacred life or bids a nation bleed!

For all defensive purposes, our country has of the war spirit enough and to spare. Indiscreetly fostered, encouraged, as it too often is, from absurd ostentation, it is unwise and dangerous. It is a petted tiger that may, in some sudden mood of its uproused nature, turn upon and tear its master. It may seek or make an occasion in our sectional or party difficulties, and a field amid our hill-sides and valleys. Upon the measureless

horrors of such a consummation, I dare not draw your eyes even for a moment. But let the shadow of that passing thought rest long enough upon your minds, to disclose the perils of the ambition that would cherish an excessive military spirit in our people, or win, by unblessed wars, a military glory for our country.

Is there nothing, then, that a patriotic ambition should seek for our country? Nothing worthy the high aspirations and devoted efforts of the young citizen, just entering the busy arena of life? Much! much! Enough to engage every energy, enlist every aspiration, and reward every hope. Let him regard the nation in its true light, as a great family; and let him seek for it those triumphs and blessings, which a good man would ask, from heaven, for the circle that is gathered around his fire-side, or shaded by his roof-tree. Let him desire for his country the power that will impart security; the security that will guarantee peace; the competence that will avert dependence and penury, and the honor that will confer self-respect and the respect of others. Beneath the shade and shelter of these, every good that can bless and brighten a people may be fostered. But these may seem, to the enthusiast, but homely and undazzling attainments. They are so—plain as the elements "that clip us round about"—as the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the fire that warms the earth that sustains us—but not less valuable, not less vital. We may be thoughtlessly ungrateful, with them—but would perish without them. It is the great, the fearful error of the American mind and heart, that no privation has aroused us to a sense of our unbounded opulence, in all the blessings with which a nation can be endowed, and with which

God—(*non nobis—non nobis*—we owe all to a gracious Providence) with which God has favored us. Our health cannot appreciate its own happiness, nor realize the diseases with which the world beside is wasted; and our unstartled security smiles at dangers, from which a miracle of mercy alone protects us. How profound should be our gratitude; how earnest our efforts to merit, to preserve, and to extend the blessings vouchsafed to us! The patriot can hardly doubt as to *the true aims of American ambition*, while these duties invoke him to guard the freedom which our race has never before been found worthy, save in a limited degree and for a brief season, to enjoy; to expand and elevate the popular mind; to stimulate the progress that is led by reason and illustrated by virtue; to exalt and enlighten the councils of his country, wedding them to justice and honour, and inspiring that spirit which, while it would sooner proudly perish than meanly submit, would rather endure wrong than be guilty of it; to mould her character to true greatness and her destiny to real felicity; and to cherish her peace next only to her right and her honour; but, in the hour of her need, to maintain her cause until every sinew is cracked and every vein exhausted.

The patriotic objects which dignify American ambition, are to be secured by exertions worthy of them. Such exertions are to be expected only from wise and virtuous public councils; and such councils can only be secured by wisdom and virtue in the body of the people. The ambition of the patriot should acknowledge, as its first and final aim, the cultivation, in himself and in his fellow citizens, of those qualities which constitute an enlightened and worthy man; for the best citizen, whatsoever

his position in society, whatsoever his sphere of action—is the best patriot.

It is, perhaps, as important to realize what patriotism does not demand, as what it does; for erroneous views prevail, not only as to the objects of government, but as to the position and duty of the citizen in regard to it. Thus, it is an error to imagine that men are made for the State, (as in Sparta, the government of which was not only artificial, but at war with nature,) and not the State made for men; and that to promote the interests of government, sacrifices must be made of the interests of the people. When government is properly constituted, it knows no interests, no existence, apart from the people; and needs and asks no sacrifices for itself. It is also an error to expect from government positive advantages and blessings for the people, beyond protection and security. In Greece and Rome, the people were supplied with largesses of land and corn, and with amusements, by the government; and the governments of the continent at the present day, supply the masses with recreations. These are aside from the true purposes of government, and where they exist, result in the corruption and oppression of the people. The American maxim is, that the world is governed too much; and the American freeman asks from his government, only protection and exemption from wrong: he is the architect of his own fate. And the government asks, except in the exigencies of public danger, but little political service from him, and none that interferes or should interfere with the main duties of private life, duties upon which the welfare of society really depends. The man who inflames his passions to madness, by party zeal, may delude himself with the belief that patriotism demands the sacri-

fice; but he does his country and himself a wrong. The idler who neglects the duties of his home, to devote himself, at the tap-room or the caucus board, to his country, may lay the same flattering unction to his soul: but never was man more mistaken. The patriot who convinces himself that his beloved country can only be rescued from impending ruin by his elevation, or that of his favorite, to office, may soothe his perturbed spirit: the country will doubtless survive the apprehended calamity. This disposition to exaggerate such excitements, and to relieve the land from distressful fate by clamorous interposition, reminds one of the efforts of savages to aid the moon, by horns and drums and every imaginable din, while she is struggling through the horrors and perils of an eclipse: she resumes her light, and her noisy auxiliaries claim the full credit of having saved her—as our country is every few months saved—from inevitable and overwhelming destruction.

The real and great triumph of American ambition in regard to the country, is the diligent, honorable, and ardent performance of duty in the sphere chosen. It is the aggregate of these individual duties that constitutes the great impulse which is lifting up our country to true greatness. He who is true to himself, is true to the circle of which he is the centre—is true to the interests with which he is connected—is true to society and to his country. That which enlightens, purifies, elevates and renders happy, the individuals of the mass, subserves the welfare of the mass itself. The useful citizen is therefore a sound patriot. And usefulness, whatever its sphere, is honor; for

Honor and shame from no condition rise.

That is a false view of honor which connects it ever with certain visible triumphs, or supposed triumphs, as wealth, splendor, official or social rank. And nowhere is this false estimate more frequently made, than in equal America—shame upon us that it is so! Nowhere are the pregnant hinges of the knee crooked with a readier homage to empty and idle pretensions to rank, for here all such pretensions are idle, to the idiot arrogance of gold, or to the eminent meanness of official elevation—the giant pedestal of dwarfish imbecility. Defective education points out these as the objects of ambition, and makes every class yesty with a spirit of envy and discontent. "Never be satisfied till you are what you may be, President of the nation," says this sordid and false spirit. A wiser pride would say, "Your duty performed, be satisfied in any sphere." Strangers note, with wonder, the malcontent, restless and unhappy spirit of our people, who, possess what blessings they may, murmur for those still unattained; and are wretched over every triumph, of wealth, or rank, or place, enjoyed by another. This clouds every brow, disturbs every pillow, and stimulates into restlessness and agitation, all the land. The spirit of liberty is held accountable for this, but wrongfully: it is the result of defective education—of false ambition—of an absurd deference to a paltry mushroom aristocracy, vulgar, ignorant, and unworthy; but insolent, arrogant, and ostentatious.

This perversion of ambition, it is, that has overthronged the professions; that averts the hopes and efforts of aspirants away from pursuits of production, from the honorable arts of manly labor, mechanics and agriculture; that crowds the land with

professional idlers; swells and inflames cities into vast social gangrenes; and engenders and concretes a large population of adventurers, eager for any scheme, however wild or however guilty, that promises a short cut (such is the phrase) to fortune and power. Immeasurably superior, in true honor, is the calm, enlightened, virtuous and happy husbandman, who performs every duty within his own sphere, surrounds himself with an atmosphere of gratitude, affection and joy, and looks from his moral elevation, with conscious scorn and pity, down upon the varnished meanness, paltry pride, and lofty wretchedness of the struggling and vulgar aspirants below him!

The tendency of well-directed individual ambition, is always to promote the true interests of society. The first great duty is that which begins at home, and radiates thence, through the different relations of life. If that centre be not fixed, there can be no trust in the remoter circumference. Home is, to man's field of action, what the heart is to the body—the centre and citadel of health and strength and life. If duty has not a vigorous existence there, it is vain to look for it elsewhere. The destiny of a nation is determined in its homes. There, or nowhere, its wealth, virtue, freedom and happiness are forged. Well said *Æschines*, against Ctesiphon, that: "he who is insensible to that natural affection which should engage his heart to those who are most intimate and near to him, can never feel a greater regard to your welfare, (that of the Athenian people,) than to that of strangers. He who acts wickedly in private life, cannot prove excellent in his public conduct; he who is base *at home*, can never acquit himself with honor, when

sent to a strange country in a public character." This sentiment has been still more nobly expressed by the Christian poet:—

> " For when was public virtue to be found,
> Where private was not? Can he love the whole,
> Who loves no part? He be a nation's friend,
> Who is in truth the friend of no man there?
> Can he be strenuous in his country's cause,
> Who slights the charities, for whose dear sake
> That country, if at all, must be beloved."

Home virtues are not only the loftiest, but the only virtues, for those dispensed elsewhere are born at home. They are not only the truest reliance for the freedom and happiness of a country, but the only reliance. That patriot does most for his country who contributes most, by example, influence and instruction, to the happiness, pride and devotion of her homes. Greece had no homes, or none worthy of the name, and she had, therefore, no virtues. The assertion may seem daring, but is true. While the employments and pleasures of the Romans were at home, and they were so to the time of the Gracchi; while her mothers were the teachers and counsellors of her heroes and statesmen, (and such they were,) Rome was free.

> Alas, for earth! for never shall we see
> The brightness in her eye, she bore when Rome was free!

You will ask, do you consider the virtues of home, the approbation of parents, the happiness of wife and children, exalted aims of ambition, and of patriot ambition, too? It is precisely what I do think. And age will not bring wisdom to you, or the

time will come, when you will think with me; when you will be more proud of a parent's praise than of a party's acclaim; and think that to be the chief magistrate of a virtuous and well-ordered home—a home that is God's home—is the noblest triumph of a noble ambition; above, far above, the cringing triumphs of courts—the degradation of a public slave, or the bolder baseness of a public master.

Let it not be supposed, that the sphere of the just ambition which I have described, is limited; that its labors are necessarily light, its achievements contracted, or its triumphs small. The whole world of duty is before it. While there is a science unexhausted, the aspirant's labors are not closed; while there is a human wrong to be redressed, a human woe to be relieved, an earth to be served, or a Heaven to be won, his noble ambition will not tire. By performing his duty to himself and to those around him, he acquits himself of the real obligations of patriotism. By his diligence, he contributes to the nation's wealth; by his studies, he enlarges the boundaries of her science and the stores of her wisdom; by his virtues, he raises the standard of her morals; by his counsels, he directs her energies to lofty and useful aims, to the education of her young, the enlightenment of her old, and the improvement of all; and by his example, he stimulates her just ambition, encourages her virtues, and elevates her designs. Are these not labors and triumphs worthy of ambition—the ambition of a Socrates, a Cato, or a Washington—nay, the ambition of a Paul? For the true patriot regards this as God's peculiarly chosen and cherished land, and so regarding it, his love and reverence become more intense

and holy. His patriotism is religion—his politics religion—his ambition religion He recognizes the fact—a sublime one—that the equality of the human race—equal rights on earth—an equal destiny in heaven—was first taught by Christianity; that the hopes of the republican are dreams, idle, shadowy and fatal, unless sustained by the faith of the Christian; that the patriotism is false which leans only on earth; that the ambition is mean which pauses this side of heaven; that he cannot love his country who will not love his God—and that

> "He is a freeman whom the truth makes free:
> And all are slaves beside."

He is deficient in wisdom or patriotism, who is not willing to say, with Oliver Cromwell: "If any man thinks that the interest of these nations and the interest of Christianity are two separate and distinct things, I wish my soul may never enter into his secret." Or with Bacon:—"Man when he resteth and assureth himself upon divine protection and favour, gathereth a peace and faith which human nature, in itself, could not obtain. As it is in particular persons, so it is in nations: never was there such a state for magnanimity as Rome; of this State hear what Cicero saith:—"*Quam volumus, licet, patres conscripti, nos amemus, tamen nec numero Hispanos, nec robore Gallos, nec calliditate Pœnos, nec artibus Græcos, nec denique hoc ipso hujus gentis et terræ domestico nativoque sensu Italos ipsos et Latinos; sed pietate, ac religione, atque hac una sapientia, quod deorum immortalium numine omnia regi, gubernarique perspeximus, omnes gentes nationesque superavimus.*"

But I will trespass no further upon your patience.

> Vive, vale. Si quid novisti rectius istis,
> Candidus imperti; si non, his utere mecum.

The world is all before you, where to choose. Upon that choice depend the destinies, to you, not merely of time, but, it may be, of eternal ages. Your life emerges now from the cloister to the open day, like the spring that bursts upon the summit of the Allegheny—on whose first impulse of motion depends which moiety of a continent it shall traverse, which sea it shall seek and mingle with forever. The counsels of this moment will revisit you, with applause or reproach, when the eye that now flashes, with fiery confidence, along the vista of the Future, shall be dimly turned upon a chequered Past. Age, forgetting the unreturning ocean that sweeps between them, reverts ever to youth; and the mind, in its decay, dwells, with proud joy or querulous penitence, upon the first steps and stages of its long pilgrimage. As the hills around your Alma Mater, which the morning sun gilds with its glory, are, in its decline, when all the wide valley is shaded with twilight or lost in darkness, the last upon which its reluctant light lingers—so the spirit, in its setting, clings, with a wierd power of memory, to the scenes and companionships, the toils and triumphs of its morning, towering up, crowned with light, amid the darkened waste of life. May that memory be reflected back upon the departing spirit in light—the light of lofty purposes, nobly fulfilled! The same being is, in different stages of his life, so changed in himself, and so altered by the lights in which he is viewed, as to well

nigh seem, even to his own introspected vision, a different creature: when that time [now thought so remote, but so soon to be reached,] shall have arrived with you—winning, on its way, by a life of honor, an age of peace—may the old man of that future—throwing back his whitened hairs, and smiling through joyful tears—acquit the youth of to-day, and hail, with renewed confidence, the immortal hope of his morrow!

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